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Vanuatu prime minister visits Huawei, views policing technology

By Kirsty Needham

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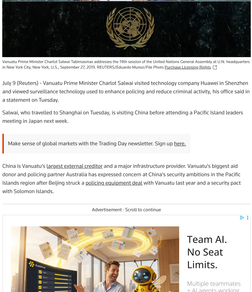

Vanuatu Prime Minister Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas addresses the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. Headquarters in New York City, New York, U.S., September 27, 2019. REUTERS/Eduardo Munoz/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights

July 9 (Reuters) - Vanuatu Prime Minister Charlot Salwai visited technology company Huawei in Shenzhen and viewed surveillance technology used to enhance policing and reduce criminal activity, his office said in a statement on Tuesday.

Salwai, who travelled to Shanghai on Tuesday, is visiting China before attending a Pacific Island leaders meeting in Japan next week.

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China is Vanuatu's largest external creditor and a major infrastructure provider. Vanuatu's biggest aid donor and policing partner Australia has expressed concern at China's security ambitions in the Pacific Islands region after Beijing struck a policing equipment deal with Vanuatu last year and a security pact with Solomon Islands.

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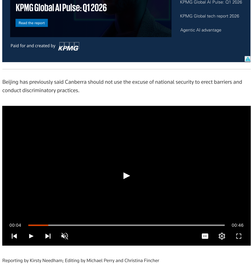

Huawei provided digital systems to cities like Port Vila, the Vanuatu capital, to "reduce criminal activity", a Vanuatu government statement posted to social media said.

The police surveillance system required a data centre in Vanuatu, it added.

A spokesman from the Vanuatu prime minister's office told Reuters that Vanuatu police did not currently use the Huawei surveillance system.

Vanuatu has a population of around 300,000 across an archipelago, with some 50,000 living in the capital Port Vila.

Australia has banned Huawei from participating in its 5G network on national security grounds, and has invested heavily in funding subsea telecommunications cables to Pacific Islands nations to shut out a competing offer from Huawei.

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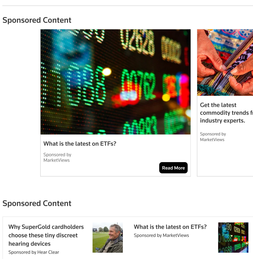
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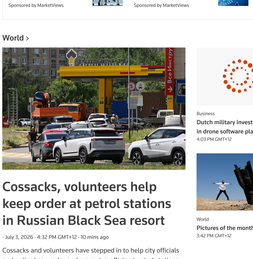
Beijing has previously said Canberra should not use the excuse of national security to erect barriers and conduct discriminatory practices.



Reporting by Kirsty Needham; Editing by Michael Perry and Christina Fincher

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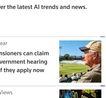

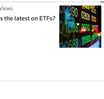

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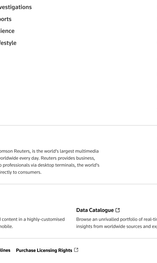

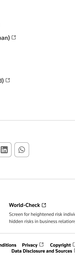

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